

T H E
A P O S T O L I C A L

And *True Opinion* concerning the
H O L Y T R I N I T Y,
Revived and Asserted:

Partly by Twelve A R G U M E N T S levied against
the Traditional and False Opinion about
the *Godhead* of the *Holy Spirit*.

Partly by a C O N F E S S I O N of F A I T H
touching the Three Persons.

Both which having been formerly set forth, were much
altered and augmented, with Explications
of Scripture, and with Reasons:

And finally,
With T E S T I M O N I E S of the F A T H E R S,
And of Others.

All Reprinted, *Anno* 1653.

By J O H N B I D L E, M. A.

And now again with the LIFE of the Author
prefixed, *Anno Dom.* 1691.

18

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
1850-1855

CHICAGO, ILL. U.S.A.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

CHICAGO, ILL. U.S.A.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

CHICAGO, ILL. U.S.A.

A SHORT
 ACCOUNT
 OF THE
 LIFE
 OF

John Bidle, M. A.

Sometimes of *Magd. Hall, Oxon.*

THE intelligent and searching Reader, finding in this Book, under the Title of *The Apostolical and true Opinion, concerning the Holy Trinity, Revived and Asserted, &c.* several Explications of Holy Scripture, and Testimonies out of the most ancient Christian Writers, touching that great and momentous Doctrine, much differing from the commonly-receiv'd Opinions of both Papists and Protestants of these later Ages, will, without doubt, be desirous to know something of the Author's Life and Qualifications. Let

him please therefore to take this plain and short Account, without those Embellishments, which the Lives of eminent Men are deservedly adorned with, but which my Abilities will not reach to.

Know then, that the Author, *John Bidle*, was born at *Watton-under-hedge*, in the County of *Gloucester*, in the Year of our Lord Christ, 1615. His Father, *Edward Bidle*, was of a middle sort of Yeomen, and also dealt in Woollen Clothes; by which means he maintained his Family honestly, and with credit suitable to his Rank, or rather above it. His

Son *John*, our Author, was educated in the Free-School of that Town; where his proficiency in the Learning there taught, was soon taken notice of, both by Neighbours, and those more remote; among whom my Lord *Barkley*, as a Personage of the greatest Honour, so great a lover and promoter of Learning, is in the first place to be remembred. Who in respect to the early Blossoms of a rare Wit, great Probity and Ingenuity in our young Scholar, conferr'd upon him the exhibition of ten Pounds *per Annum*, among other the poorer Scholars; although by his Age, being not of ten Years, he was not qualified, according to common Method, for that Donation. And this Favour, it seems, added greater Vigour and Industry to the Youth's Studies; for after this, he did not only with ease surpass those his School-fellows of the same Rank, but, in Time, even out-run his Instructions, and became Tutor to himself; so overcoming both the Labours of his Task, and those Difficulties he met with in his Course. However, the want of fit Teaching on the one hand, and the benefit of that Exhibition on the other, or perhaps the want of fit Provisions for a Student in the University, detain'd him longer in that School, than was otherwise for his Improvement; for here he continued till he was about Seventeen Years of Age. In this Time he gave some Specimens of his pregnant, both Wit and Judgment, in the Translation of *Virgil's Bucolics*, and the two first Satyrs of *Juvenal*, into elegant English Verse; afterward publish'd in print, with approbation of Learned Men. He composed also, and recited, before a full Auditory, an elaborate Oration in Latin, for a gracing to the Funeral of an honourable School-fellow. Yea, even in these younger Years was observed in him a singular piety of Mind, and contempt of secular Affairs; Whence it came, that he applied himself to the study of Verrue, together with the Liberal Arts; and with great diligence gave dutiful Assistance to his Mother, become a Widow by the Death of his Father.

From hence he was sent to the University

of *Oxford*, and was admitted a Student in *Magdalen-Hall* there; where, in due time, he proceeded Master of Arts with good applause, and was reckon'd among those of his rank, that did in an especial manner commend the Learning of that Academy. Here he did so Philosophize, as it might be observed, he was determined more by Reason than Authority; however, in Divine Things he did not much dissent from the common Doctrine, as may be collected from a little Tract he wrote against Dancing. But the fame of his Learning and Prudence in instructing Pupils there, having conciliated to him the Esteem of Persons of Quality, and more particularly of the Overseers of the School of *Wootton*, he was chosen by them to succeed in the Mastership thereof; which he may seem to have as wisely as modestly refused, but did in the mean time commend to them, another fit Person, whom they accepted of. This refusal gave opportunity to the Magistrates of *Gloucester*, upon ample Recommendations of the principal Persons in the University, to chuse and importune him to be Master of the Free School of *Crisps* in that City; which he consented to; and at his approach thither, was met and received by them with much Joy and Honour, *Anno 1641*. Neither did he deceive their Expectations, nor come short of the Character had been given of him, whilst he discharged that Imployment with such skil and faithfulness, that they thought themselves not a little happy in that behalf, who could commit their Sons to his Instruction. Whence it came to pass, that not so much by the Salary, which is not great, but by the Gratuities of Parents, he reap'd considerable Profits. But Money did not infect his Mind with the love of it; his Mind was set upon the Knowledge of Divine Truth, and that, not for Curiosity, but for the Love of Christ, who is Truth and Life. And having laid aside the Impediments of Prejudice, he gave himself liberty to try all things, that he might hold fast that which is good. Thus diligently reading the Holy Scripture, (for *Socinian* Books he had read none)

none) and fervently imploring Divine Illumination, he perceiv'd the common Doctrin concerning the Holy Trinity was not well grounded in Revelation, much less in Reason. And being as generous in speaking, as free in judging, he did, as occasion offered, discover his Reasons of questioning it: Which some Zealots not being able to bear, they accus'd him to the Magistrates of Heresy in that Point, before whom he exhibited in Writing this Confession.

May 2, 1644.

1. I believe there is but one Infinite and Almighty Essence, called God.

2. I believe, that as there is but one Infinite and Almighty Essence, so there is but one Person in that Essence.

3. I believe that our Saviour Jesus Christ is truly God, by being truly, really and properly united to the only Person of the Infinite and Almighty Essence.

But when this did not satisfy the Magistrates, but they did still press upon him to acknowledg three Persons in the Divine Essence, and he, it seems, knowing that the word Persons, when ascribed to God, is taken both by the Ancient Fathers, and by Modern Writers in various Significations, did, about fourteen days after, confess that that there are three in that one Divine Essence commonly termed Persons.

By this it appears, that how distinct soever he might be in his Conceptions concerning the Trinity, yet he was not determinate enough in his expressing of that matter, as he became not long after. For now proceeding sincerely in his search of holy Scripture, and in earnest Prayer to Almighty God for his Assistance, he attained that firmness of Understanding and Resolution, and that distinctness of Expression, that he set himself to confer with his Familiars, and open his Mind freely upon those Questions of one God, and three Persons. And not only so, but he also wrote some pithy Arguments against the supposed Deity of the Holy Spirit, whom yet he held to be the

third Person in the Holy Trinity. Whereupon a certain unfaithful Person betraying him to the Magistrate, and the Commissioners of Parliament there residing, (for then was there War between the King and Parliament) he was committed Dec. 2. 1645, to the common Goal (tho at that time afflicted with a sore Fever) there to be detained till a fit occasion of presenting him before the Parliament at London (which was then inflamed with Geneva-Zeal against such Hereticks) to be punished as they should determine. But now an eminent Person of Gloucester commiserating his Case, procured his Inlargement upon Security for an Appearance, as aforesaid, which Mr. Bidle made accordingly when summoned thereto, about six Months after. And the Parliament delayed not to take Cognizance of his Cause, for they presently chose a Committee to examine him; who freely confest before them, that he did deny the commonly believ'd Deity of the Holy Ghost, whereof he was accus'd; but was ready to hear what could be oppos'd to him, and to acknowledg his Error, if he could not maintain it for Truth. But being wearied with no less long than chargeable Expectation, he wrote the Letter hereafter inserted, dated April 1, 1647, to an eminent Knight, a Member of Parliament, praying he would report his Case to their House, that he might be either judged or discharged. But what followed thence was the Commitment of Mr. Bidle to the Custody of one of their Officers (which Restraint continued for five Years ensuing) and the referring him to the Assembly of the Presbyterian Divines, then sitting at Westminster, for his Conviction: Before some of which he often appear'd, and gave them in Writing his Arguments against the Deity of the Holy Spirit; but neither in Discourses nor in Writing could he obtain any pertinent, much less solid Answer. Instead of that, they sollicite the Parliament, in whose hands was the supream Power at that time, and procure a Draconick Ordinance (May 2. 1648.) for inflicting the Punishment of Death upon those that held Opinions contrary to the Presbyterian Points about the Trinity

Trinity, and other Doctrines, whom they named Blasphemers and Hereticks, and severe Penalties upon those that differ'd in lesser matters. This seemed a Damnatory Sentence against Mr. *Bidle*, which there was no escape from. But it pleased the Almighty to make way for him; by a Dissention in the Parliament it self; to the better part whereof the Army joyn'd its Power, as for other Reasons, so for that there were in it many both Officers and Souldiers, liable to the Severities of that mention'd Ordinance, which therefore from that time for divers Years lay unregarded.

Before this he had published the *Twelve Arguments against the Drity of the Holy Spirit*, and this Year his Confession of Faith touching the Holy Trinity, which were both Reprinted, Anno 1653. together with most clear and full Testimonies for the Unity of the Person of God in distinction from the Son and Spirit, out of certain most celebrated Christian Fathers, who lived in the first Ages after Christ, and others. Now the Zealots in Parliament against Dissenters being excluded, he had more liberty allow'd by his Keeper, who suffered him upon Security given to go into *Staffordshire*, where he lived sometimes with a Justice of Peace, who not only entertained him courteously, but at his Death left him a Legacy, which was a very seasonable supply to him who had already spent in a manner all he had gotten at *Gloucester*; or elsewhere (which was not inconsiderable) in now about four Years chargeable restraint. But he could not continue long here, before notice was given to Judge *Bradshaw*, President of the Council of State, who caus'd him to be recalled by his Keeper, and kept more straitly. In this long Confinement, that which was most grievous to this Sufferer (devoted to the Service of Truth) was, that the Imputation of Blasphemy and Heresy to him, had so alienated all People generally from him, that he could have almost none to converse with; and of the Divines, whose Duty it was to have endeavoured his Information, not one (that I could ever here of) vouchsafed him a Visit in that seven Years time of his Confinement, except perhaps one

Mr. *Gunning*, afterward Bishop of *Ely*. Here he spent even all his Substance, insomuch that instead of an Ordinary for ~~meat~~ which he could not pay for, he was glad of the cheaper support of drinking a draught of Milk from the Cow Morning and Evening. At length it pleased the Divine Goodness to succour him through the favour of a Learned Man, who commended him to *Roger Daniel* the Printer, for a Man qualified with fit Learning and Integrity for correcting of the Impression of the *Septuagint* Greek Bible, which was then designed to be set forth with great Accuracy, and was accordingly performed the Employment being also most acceptable to *J. Bidle*, because his delight was in the Law of God.

But in Feb. 1651, was promulgated by the Parliament a general Act of Oblivion, which restored among others our conscientious Prisoner to his full Liberty, which he now improves among those Friends he had at length gained in *London*, in meeting together every Lord's-day for expounding Scripture, and discoursing thereupon, for the clearing of the Truths therein contained, and detecting of common Errors; by which means the Doctrine of one God, and Christ his only Son, and his Holy Spirit, was so propagated, that the Ministers at *London* were exceedingly offended at it, but could not hinder it by Secular Power, which then favour'd Liberty of Religion and Conscience. In the Year 1654, he publish'd a twofold Scripture-Catechism. In the same Year Dr. *Gunning* (whom I named before) afterward *Regius Professor* of Divinity at *Cambridge*, and no less famous for Subtlety of disputing than Learning, thinking (it seems) he should do great Service to the common Doctrine, if he put a Baffle upon the great Oppugner of it, before even those who began to hearken to him; he came one Lord's-day to Mr. *Bidle's* Meeting, well accompanied with learned Witnesses, and commences a fair Scholastick Dispute, asserting the Deity of the Holy Ghost; and the next Lord's-day in the same Auditory concerning the supreme Deity of Christ, the Son of the most High. They disputed syllogistically, and

and took their turns of responding and opposing, wherein *John Bidle* acquitted himself with so much Learning, Judgment and Knowledge in the sense of Holy Scriptures, that instead of losing, he gained much Credit both to himself and his Cause, as even the Gentlemen of Dr. *Gunning's* Party, some of them had the ingenuity to acknowledge. After this Dr. *Gunning* comes again at unawares, and hears *J. Biddle* arguing against the Satisfaction of Punitive Justice by the Death of Christ, which the Doctor with great vigour defends; but found the Opponent no less skilful and dextrous in this conflict than in the former, which the Doctor himself had the Generosity afterward to confess.

In December following he was brought to the Bar of the Commons House of Parliament, conven'd by *Oliver Cromwell* the Protector, and there asked, If he was the Author of that *Two-fold Scripture Catechism*, (wherein all the Questions are answered in the words of Scripture at large)? He answered by asking, Whether it seem'd reasonable, that one brought before a Judgment-Sear as a Criminal, should accuse himself? And they presently committed him a close Prisoner to the *Gatehouse*, Decemb. 3. prohibiting him the use of Pen, Ink, and Paper, or the access of any Visitant; and commanded his Books to be burnt by the common Executioner. In this case nothing less than capital Punishment could be expected; which, notwithstanding, the Prisoner bare a composed and cheerful Mind, hoping in God, whose Cause he suffer'd for, for a happy Event. Neither did this Hope deceive him, for the Protector, for Reasons of his own Interest, dissolv'd that Parliament: and the Prisoner, after about six Months Imprisonment, obtain'd his Liberty at the Court of the *Kings*, or *Upper Bench*, May 28. by due Course of Law; Neither was he any whit discouraged by these Dangers and Sufferings, but betook himself to his former Exercises for propagating Truth, and the Honour of Almighty God concern'd therein.

But scarce a Year was expired, when a

nother no less formidable Danger overtook him, which was thus: There was a considerable number of a Congregation of those called *Anabaptists*, who began to entertain *J. Bidle's* Sentiments concerning the Trinity. The Pastor, one *Griffin*, thinking (it should seem) to reduce them to their former Opinion, and to put a stop to the spreading of this Gangreen, (as he esteemed it) challenges Mr. *Bidle* to a publick Disputation, at his Meeting place at *St. Paul's*, upon the Subject of Christ's Supream Deity; which he would have declin'd, as knowing Mr. *Griffin* to be far inferior to him in Learning, &c. but at length he accepted it: And being met in the midst of a numerous Auditory, among whom not a few of *J. Bidle's* inveterate and fiery Adversaries, especially some Booksellers: Mr. *Griffin*, either imprudently, or to prejudice the Hearers against his Antagonist, or for some worse End, repeating the Question, asks, If any Man there did deny, that Christ was God most High? To which our *Bidle* resolutely and conscientiously answers, *I do deny it*: By which generous Profession, he gave his Adversaries occasion of a positive and clear Accusation, which they soon laid hold of. For though *John Griffin* was not (in the Judgment of all Judicious Hearers) able to cope with *John Bidle*, yet he had the confidence to consent to another Meeting, when *J. Bidle* should take his turn of proving the Negative of the Question between them. But before that Day came, he was cast into the Prison, first of the *Compter*, then of *Newgate*, London, July 3. 1655. and tried for his Life the next Sessions, upon that obsolete and abrogated Ordinance, against Blasphemy and Heresy, of May 2. 1648. mention'd before. To the Indictment hereupon, he prays Counsel might be allow'd him to plead the illegality of it; Which being denied him by the Judges, and the Sentence of a Mute threatned, he at length gave into Court his Exceptions ingrossed in Parchment; and with much struggling, had Counsel allow'd him; but the Trial was deferr'd to the next Day. But the Protector well knowing it was not for the Interest of his Government, either to

have

have him Condemn'd or Absolv'd, takes him out of the Hands of the Law, and sends him away to the Isle of *Scilly*, Octob. 5. 1655. For, on the one Hand, the Presbyterians, and all Enemies to Liberty of Religion, (of which there appear'd a great number at his Trial) would be offended at his Release; and all that were for Liberty, (among whom many Congregations of *Anabaptists* especially) had petition'd the Protector for his discharge from prosecution upon that Ordinance, by which all their Liberties were threatened and condemned, and the Capital Article of the Protector's Government infringed; which run thus, *That such as profess Faith in God by Jesus Christ, (though differing in Judgment from the Doctrine, Worship, or Discipline publicly held forth) shall not be restrained from, but shall be protected, &c. Art. 37. That all Laws, Statutes, Ordinances, &c. to the contrary of the aforesaid Liberty, shall be esteemed as Null and Void, Art. 38.*

Now although this Banishment drew with it many Inconveniences, yet through the Goodness of God it was temper'd with Mercies. Here the Prisoner enjoy'd much Divine Comfort from the Heavenly Contemplations, which his Retirement gave him opportunity for: Here he had sweet Communion with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, and attained a clearer Understanding of the Divine Oracles in many particulars. Here, whilst he was more abundantly confirm'd in the Doctrines of his Confession of Faith, &c. yet he seems notwithstanding to have become more doubtful about some other Points, which he had formerly held, as appears from his *Essay to the Explaining of the Revelation*, which he wrote after his return thence: which shews that he still maintain'd a free and unprejudiced Mind. And here we must not forget to do the Protector this right, as to tell the World, that after some time he was pleas'd to allow his Prisoner a Hundred Crowns *per Annum* for his subsistence, to wit, lest being removed far from his Friends and Employments, he should want Necessaries. This Banishment seems also to have been beneficial to him on

this Account, that it was a means to prevent another of the Protector's Parliaments from decreeing any thing more rigid against him, being now absent and out of their way. In this Exile he continued about three Years, notwithstanding all Endeavours of his Friends for his Liberty; and his own Letters, both to the Protector and to Mr. *Calamy*, (an eminent Presbyterian Minister) to reason them into compassion. At length, through the Importunity of Friends, and other Occurrences, the Protector suffer'd a Writ of *Habeas Corpus* to be granted out of the *Upper-Bench Court* (as it was then called) and to be obeyed by the Governour of *Scilly*, whereby the Prisoner was brought thence; and by that Court set at liberty, as finding no legal Cause of detaining him.

And now, notwithstanding all these Persecutions, Sufferings and Dangers he had hitherto underwent, he was not terrified, from what he counted his Duty to Christ, in propagating the true knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he had sent, but return'd to his long interrupted Exercises among his Friends. But he could not long labour in this Field, for about five Months after, the Protector *Oliver* dies, and his Son *Richard* succeeding, calls a Parliament, dangerous certainly to *John Bidle* in the first place, if to any other; which being foreseen, he was forced as it were, (for he did it with regret,) by the Importunity of a Noble Friend, to retire into the Country during their Session. But that Parliament being dissolv'd, he returned to his wonted Station, till such time as the Divisions between the Protector and Army had brought into Power again the Long Parliament; and the Divisions of that Parliament, and Army, and People, had brought in General *Monk* out of Scotland, he the Secluded Members, and they the Exil'd King *Charles*, and with him a restoration of the Ancient Government in Church and State. Then after some time the Liberty of Dissenting Worshipers was taken away, and their Meetings punish'd as seditious. Now *J. Bidle* yields to the Time, and restrains himself

self from publick to more private Assemblies. But neither could he long enjoy those, however peaceable and harmless, for on the first of *June*, 1662. He was haled out of his Lodgings, where he was conven'd with some few of his Friends for Divine Worship, and carried before Sir *Rich. Brown*, who forthwith committed them all to the publick Prison; *J. Bidle* to the Dungeon, where he lay for five hours, and was denied the benefit of the Law, which admits Offenders of that sort to Bail for their Appearance. There they lay till the Recorder, moved with more reverence of the Laws, took security for their answering to their Charge next Sessions; which they perform'd accordingly. But when the Court could not find any Statute whereon to form any Criminal Indictment against them, they were refer'd to the Sessions following; and then were proceeded against, by pretext of an Offence against Common Law, (the Rules of which lie mostly in the Judges Breasts) and thereupon fined every one of the Hearers in the penalty of Twenty Pounds, and *J. Bidle* in One Hundred; to lie in Prison till paid. Now though the Sheriff would generously have been satisfied with Ten Pounds for him, and he would have paid it, yet the Enmity of Sir *Rich. Brown* was such, as he could not be induced to consent thereto upon any terms; but threatn'd him with a Seven Years Imprisonment, though he should pay the whole Hundred Pounds; This was the cause of his continuing in Prison; but he had not been there full five Weeks, till by reason of the noisomness of the Place and pent Air, to him, whose only Recreation and Exercise had been, for many Years, to walk daily into the free Air, he contracted a Disease, which in a few days, alas, put a period to his Life. In this Extremity Sir *R. Brown* could not be moved to grant the Sick Prisoner the present Comfort of a Removal, in order to a Recovery; but Sheriff *Meynel*, to the praise of his great Humanity, did grant it: But, alas, the second Day after his removal, between five and six a Clock in the Morning, the 22th of *September* 1662. he

quietly gave up his Spirit to God. He was then in the strength of his Age, the 47th Year of his Life. Now it did appear, (as he had said formerly) that by frequent Meditations of the Resurrection and future Happiness, he had made Death contemptible to himself. For as soon, as by the Disease more strongly annoying his Brain, he perceiv'd a great Alteration, he signified it to his Friends, and would not be induced to any Discourse, but compos'd himself as it were to sleep, during that eight hours time, which after that he liv'd, being very sparing of Words, or indeed of Groans, that might argue any Impatience; notwithstanding, when a certain pious Mitron, who ministred to him, broke forth into this (as it were) Farewell-saying, *God grant we may see one another in the Kingdom of Heaven*: He, now his Speech failing, left up his quivering Hand, shewing thereby (it seems) how pleasing that Wish was to him. And that he was not surpriz'd with dying at this time, may be collected from his often saying before, That if he should be once more cast into Prison, he should never be restor'd to Liberty; and moreover, *That the Work was done*, meaning, That that Truth which God had rais'd him up to profess, was sufficiently brought to light, there wanted only Ingenuity in Men, for the embracing and acknowledging it.

Having in this manner described the Course of *John Bidle's* Life, it may perhaps be enquired, why being so learned and able a Man, he published so few Books, especially being provoked by divers Answers to what he did publish, to which he did not reply? To this it may be answered, first, That he was verily perswaded, that Truth being in it self plain and simple, especially what is necessary and very useful, is easy to be apprehended by few words; it's Error that seeks Garnish in many Words and Figures of Speech. Again, what he did publish, he well deliberated of; so that he did not find in the adverse Writings, any thing of moment, which an attentive Reader might not perceive already obviated: And they that attend not to the first

Propositions, will not receive benefit by Replies and Rejoinders. We add, that he treading in a Path, long over-grown with Briars and Thorns of Error and Sophistry, it requir'd vastly greater Labour and Diligence to find out the Way of Truth, in which no English-Man had by any appearing Foot-steps gone before him for many Ages.

But that which in my Judgment does more commend our *John Bidle*, than all his Labours and Sufferings for the propagation of great and important Truths, is his great Zeal for promoting Holiness of Life and Manners; for this was always his End and Design in what he taught. He valued not his Doctrines for Speculation but Practice; insomuch that he would not discourse of those Points wherein he differed from others, with those that appear'd not religious according to their Knowledge. Neither could he bear those that dissembled in Profession for Worldly Interests. He was a strict Observer himself, and a severe Exactor in others, of reverence in speaking of God, and Christ, and Holy Things; so that he would by no means hear their Names, or any Sentence of Holy Scripture us'd vainly or lightly, much less any foolish Talking, or Scurrility. He would often tell his Friends, that no Religion would benefit a bad Man; and call upon them to resolve with themselves, as well to profess and practise the Truth that is according to Godliness, as to study to find it out; and that against all Terrors or Allurements to the contrary; being assured that nothing displeasing to Almighty God, could be in any wise profitable to them. But as for those that were really of a contrary Mind to him, how mean soever, (for he was very humble and condescending) they could not oblige him more, than by pertinent Objections, soberly urg'd, to give him the opportunity of resolving them; which he always did with great simplicity and plainness of Speech, without any ostentation of Learning, which yet he was as much master of, as those most famous on that Account. Indeed his Learning in Matters of Religion was

gain'd by a diligent study of the Holy Scriptures, especially of the New Testament, wherein he was so conversant, that he retain'd it all in his Memory *verbatim*, not only in English, but in Greek, as far as the Fourth Chapter of the *Revelation of St. John*. This thorow-knowledge in the Scriptures, join'd with an ordinary, happy, and ready Memory, whereby he retain'd also the Sum of what he had read in other Authors, gave him great advantage against all Opponents, and in all Discourses, but without the least appearance of boasting.

I could mention many other things, which shew that it was in his Heart to promote Piety, and that he had no design of aggrandizing his Name by opposition to common Doctrines. Indeed, he was a great Asserter of common Doctrines against Noval Opinions, that tended either to Sedition, Libertinism, or Superstition. And in what he held contrary to the Current, he did not endeavour to tie those he had won, to be of his Mind in such a Society, and by such a Society, and by such bands, as might continue them a successive Party, bearing his Name as their Founder, but left them at all that liberty, which the Duty of owning the Truth according to their Conscience, and of mutual edification, would allow them. And as no tincture of Ambition did appear in him, so neither of the least degree of coveting worldly Gain: for he always sustain'd himself by his own Industry, when he was in capacity of using it; and would never accept of any Supplies, tho offer'd; but when his Necessities, arising from Imprisonment, Sicknes, or the like, forc'd him to it, (Except that after his seven Years restraint, a friendly Citizen of *London* importun'd him to take a Bed and Board with him; and after his Deliverance from *Scilly* another did the like) for he had learn'd to be contented with a little, and sought not more, yea out of that little would contribute to the Necessities of others. Temperance was at all times most conspicuous in him, as well in eating as in drinking: and he thought it not enough to be very chaste, but that he ought

ought to avoid all suspicion of unchastity; inſomuch that he would not willingly look upon a Woman without juſt occaſion; and was very uneaſy, if left in a room with one alone, till reliev'd by more Company.

I have ſpoke above of the Reverence and Gravity he us'd himſelf, and exacted of others, in handling of Holy Things; in other matters he would be merry and pleaſant, and liked well that the Company ſhould be ſo too; yet even in this common Converſe, he always retain'd an awe of the Divine Preſence, and was ſometimes obſerv'd to lift up his Hand ſuddenly; which thoſe that were intimate with him, knew to be an effect of a ſecret Ejaculation. But in his Cloſet-Devotions, he was wont often to proſtrate himſelf upon the Ground, after the manner of our Saviour in his Agony, and would commend that Poſture of Worſhip al-

ſo to his moſt intimate Friends. But his Devotion toward God, and ſtudy for propagating Divine Truth, did not, as in ſome Perſons, ſwallow up his Juſtice and Charity toward Men, for he was as careful a pra-ctiſer and promoter of thoſe Virtues, as his Opinion of their Neceſſity to Salvation did require.

In fine, many more things might be remembred, which might demonſtrate *John Bidle*, to have been a Man, if any in this laſt Age, moſt eminent for Piety and Virtue, as well as Learning and Knowledg. But thus much at leaſt was due to his Memory, not only to vindicate him from thoſe Depraved Affections that encline Men to Heresy, and to be the Authors of new Sects: but to give the World an Example of a ſincere Reformer.

T H E E N D.

*A Letter written to Sir H. V. a Member of the
Honourable House of Commons.*

S I R,

HAVING now attended for the space of sixteen Months, partly in the Country, and partly in *Westminster*, that I might come to my Answer before the Parliament; and finding, after all this tarriance, that I am still as far from having my Cause determined as ever: I am even forced to make my Address to you, and to beseech you, if you have any Bowels towards them that are in Misery, that you would either procure my Discharge, or at least make Report to the House touching my denial of the supposed Deity of the Holy Spirit. For that this only is the Matter in Contestation, you very well know, having both heard my Confession before the Committee, and remembring how, when I was urged to declare my Judgment concerning the Deity of Christ, I waved the Question, as neither being that I was accused of, nor which I had yet sufficiently studied, to engage my self publickly therein. As for my Opini-

* See *Heb. 1. 1, 14.* whence these words are borrowed; and compare it with *1 Pet. 1. 12.* as also *Heb. 1. 7.* compared with *Act. 2. 2, 3, 4.* and it will easily appear that the Holy Spirit is a Minister of God, as well as others.

(a) *1 Pet. 5. 8.* (b) *Zech. 13. 2.* (c) *1 Sam. 16. 15, 16.* (d) *Ibid. vers. ult.* (e) *1 King. 22. 21.* See the Original.

on touching the Holy Spirit, it is thus: *I believe the Holy Spirit to be the chief of all* ministring Spirits, peculiarly sent out from Heaven to minister on their behalf that shall inherit Salvation: and I do place him, both according to the Scripture, and the Primitive Christians, and by Name Justin Martyr in his Apology, in the third Rank after God and Christ, giving him a pre-eminence above all the rest of the Heavenly Host: So that as there is one principal Spirit among the Evil Angels, known in Scripture by the Name of Satan, or the (a) Adversary; or (b) the unclean Spirit; or (c) the evil Spirit of God; or (d) the Spirit of God; or (e) the Spirit by way of Eminence: Even so is there one principal Spirit,*

(I borrow this Appellation from the *Septuagint*, who render the latter Clause of the 12th Vers. of *Psal. 51.* in this manner, πνεύματι ἡγεμονικῷ στήριξόν με, *Spiritu principali fulci me*, Stablish me with thy principal Spirit) there is, I say, one principal Spirit among the Good Angels, called by the Name of the

the (a) Advocate; or (b) the Holy Spirit; or (c) the good Spirit of God; or (d) the Spirit of God; or (e) the Spirit, by way of eminence. This Opinion of mine is attested by the whole Tenour of the Scripture, which perpetually speaketh of him as differing from God, and inferior to him; but is irrefragably proved by these places of Scripture, *Neh. 9. 6, 20. Thou, even thou art Lord (or Jehovah) alone; thou hast made Heaven, the Heaven of Heavens, with all their Host. Thou gavest thy good Spirit to instruct them (the Children of Israel.)* John 16. 7, 8, &c. Nevertheless, I tell you the Truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the * Advocate will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove (in the Original, convince) the World of Sin, and of Righteousness, and of Judgment. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all Truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he shall shew you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath, are mine: therefore said I, he shall take of mine, and shew it unto you.] Rom. 8. 26, 27. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our Infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us, with Groans that cannot be uttered. But he that searcheth the Hearts, knoweth what is the Mind (or Desire) of the Spirit: for he maketh intercession for the Saints according to the Will of God.] Acts 19. 2. And (Paul) finding certain Disciples, said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Spirit.] Ephes. 4. 4, 5, 6. There is one Body, and one Spirit, even as ye have been called in one Hope of your Calling. One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.] 1 Cor. 12. 3, 4, &c. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no Man speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed; and that no Man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit; but there are diversities of Gifts, yet the same Spirit. And there are diversities of Administrations, yet the same Lord; and there are diversities of Operations, yet it is the same God that worketh all in all,] Luk. 3. 21, 22. It came to pass that Jesus al-

(a) Joh. 16. 7. (b) Ephes. 4. 30. (c) Neh. 9. 20. (d) 1 Cor. 7. 40. (e) Act. 10. 19.

* So the word *παρακλησις* in the Original perpetually signifieth amongst Greek Authors, and is so rendred by the Translators themselves, 1 Joh. 2. 1. and ought to have been so rendred here, especially because he saith in the following words, that the Holy Spirit shall convince the World; for it is proper to an Advocate to convince.

so being baptized, and praying, the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a Dove upon him.] 1 Cor. 2. 11, 12, 13. But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the Depths of God. For what Man knoweth the things of a Man, save the Spirit of a Man, which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth none, but the Spirit of God, (he doth not add, as before, which is in him.) Now we have received, not the Spirit of the World, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given us of God.] Rev. 22. 12, 17. Behold, I come quickly, and my Reward is with me, to give unto every Man according as his Work shall be: and the Spirit and the Bride say, Come.] Act. 5. 32. And we are his Witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him.] Gal. 3. 5. He therefore that ministreth (or giveth) to you the Spirit, and worketh Miracles among you, doth he it by the Works of the Law, or by the Hearing (or rather, Preaching) of Faith?] He that ministreth, or giveth the Spirit to you; a strange kind of Speech, if the Holy Ghost were God. The Scripture is wont to speak more soberly of Almighty God, than to say that he is given by another, much less by Men, as it is here said of the Holy Spirit, 1 Cor. 8. 4. We know that an Idol is nothing in the World, and that there is no other God but one. For though there be that are called Gods, whether in Heaven or in Earth; as there be many Gods, and many Lords, yet unto us there is but one God, even the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto him; and one Lord, even Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.] You see here, that the Apostle being about to set down, who is the only God, and only Lord of Christians, maketh no mention of the Holy Spirit; which could not have been done by so faithful an Apostle, had the Holy Spirit been either God or Lord. Of these Places thus recited, no Man, tho never so subtil, and tho he turn and wind his Wit every way, shall ever be able to make Sense, unless he take the Holy Spirit to be what I say.

Behold now the Cause for which I have lien under Persecution, raised against me by my Adversaries; who being unable to justify by Argument their Practice of giving Glory to the Holy Spirit, as God, in the end of their Prayers, since there is neither Precept nor Example for it in all the Scripture; and being taxed by me for giving the Glory of God to another, and worshipping what he hath not commanded, nor ever came into his Heart, have, in a cruel and unchristian manner, resorted to the Arm of Flesh, and instigated the Magistrate against me, hoping by his Sword, (not that of the Spirit) to uphold their Will-worship; but in vain, since every Plant that the Heavenly Father hath not set, shall be rooted up. And that this practice of Worshipping the Holy Spirit as God, is such a Plant as God never set in his Word, would soon

soon appear to the Honourable House, could they be but so far prevailed with, as, laying aside all Prejudice, seriously to weigh the many and solid Proofs that I produce for my Opinion out of the Scripture, together with the slight, or rather no Proofs of the adverse Party for their Opinion; which they themselves know not what to make of, but that they endeavour to delude both themselves and others with Personalities, Moods, Subsistences, and such like brain-sick Notions, that have neither sap nor sence in them, and were first hatched by the subtilty of Satan in the Heads of Platonists, to pervert the Worship of the True God. Neither could this Controversy be set on foot in a fitter juncture of time than this; wherein the Parliament and Kingdom have solemnly engaged themselves to reform Religion, both in Discipline and Doctrine. For amongst all the Corruptions in Doctrine, which certainly are many, there is none that more deserveth to be amended than this, that so palpably thwarteth the whole tenour of the Scripture, and trencheth to the very Object of our Worship, and therefore ought not to be lightly passed over by any Man that professeth himself a Christian, much more a Reformer. God is jealous of his Honour, and will not give it to another; we therefore, as beloved Children, should imitate our Heavenly Father herein, and not upon any pretence whatsoever depart from his expresse Command, and give the Worship of the supreme Lord of Heaven and Earth, to him whom the Scripture no-where affirmeth to be God. For my own particular, after a long impartial inquiry of the Truth, in this Controversy, and after much and earnest calling upon God, to give unto me the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the knowledg of him; I find my self obliged, both by the Principles of Scripture and of Reason, to embrace the Opinion I now hold forth; and as much as in me lieth, to endeavour that the Honour of Almighty God be not transferred to another, not only to the Offence of God himself, but also of his Holy Spirit, who cannot but be grieved to have that ignorantly ascribed to himself, which is proper to God that sends him, and which he no-where challengeth to himself in the Scripture. What shall befall me in the pursuance of this Work, I refer to the disposal of the all-wise God, whose Glory is dearer to me, not only than my Liberty, but than my Life. It will be your part, Honoured Sir, into whose hands God hath put such an Opportunity, to examine the Business impartially, and to be an helper to the Truth, considering that this Controversy is of the greatest importance in the World, and that the Divine Truth suffers her self not to be despised Scot-free. Neither let the meanness of my outward presence deter you from stirring, since it is the part of a wise Man, as in all things, so especially in Matters of Religion, not to regard so much who it is that speaketh, as what it is that is spoken; remembring how our Saviour in the Gospel saith, That God

is wont to hide his Secrets from the Wise and Prudent, and to reveal them unto Children. In which number I willingly reckon my self, being conscious of mine own personal Weakness, but well assured of the Strength and Evidence of the Scripture to bear me out in this Cause; and remain

April 1. 1647.

Yours in the Lord,

J. Bidle.

To the READER.

Christian Reader, I beseech thee, as thou tenderest thy Salvation, that thou wouldst thoroughly examine the following Disputation, in the Fear of God, considering how much his Glory is concerned therein; and at any band forbear to condemn my Opinion as erroneous, till thou art able to bring pertinent and solid Answers to all my Arguments; for thou must know, that tho I have contested with sundry Learned Men, yet hath none hitherto produced a satisfactory Answer to so much as one Argument. Farewel.

J. B.

ERRATA.

XII. Arg. Pag. 13. Col. 1. line 2. read *is not here*.

Test. Page 7. Just. Mart. Col. 2. line 16. read *divides*.

Conf. P. 9. Col. 1. l. 6. r. *ver.* 27. P. 16. Col. 1. l. 15. for *thi*, r. *his*.